

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 059208

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: MORNING SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT REPORTS

1. LEBANON: MUTINY LOVES COMPANY

EMBASSY BEIRUT REPORTS THAT THE INCREASING NUMBER OF ARMY
MUTINIES IS STIRRING THE LEBANESE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE.
LOYALIST OFFICERS ARE CIRCULATING RUMORS OF AN IMPENDING
COUP. THE EMBASSY NOTES:

--LEFTIST ELEMENTS, LED BY JUMBLATT, ARE OPENLY SUP-
PORTING KHATIB AND HIS FOLLOWERS AND MAY SEEK TO FORCE
THE SYRIANS OVER TO THEIR SIDE.

--CHAMOUN, REFLECTING THE VIEWS OF THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT,
IS FOR FIRM ACTION AGAINST THE REBELS IN THE SOUTH,
WHILE KARAME SUPPORTS MEDIATION.

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--ATTEMPTS TO FORM A CABINET ARE STILL AT AN IMPASSE,
A SITUATION WHICH MAY HAVE ENCOURAGED THE MUTINEERS.

EMBASSY COMMENT: THE SYRIANS MAY TRY TO COMBINE TOUGHNESS
WITH CONCILIATION IN AN EFFORT TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS, POSSIBLY
BY DECREETING AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF AMNESTY. FEAR OF
ISRAELI REACTION UNDERLIES THINKING IN ALL LEBANESE
CIRCLES. (CONFIDENTIAL) BEIRUT 2159 (LIMDIS) AND BEIRUT
2160, 3/10.)

2. ASAD IN FRANCE

AN MFA OFFICIAL HAS INFORMED EMBASSY DAMASCUS THAT THE SARG
HOPES ASAD'S MARCH 16-18 VISIT TO FRANCE WILL BOOST HIS
PRESTIGE AND OBTAIN FOR DAMASCUS:

--FRENCH VIEWS ON RECONVENING THE UNSC FOR FURTHER
DEBATE ON THE MIDDLE EAST; AND

--GOF REACTION TO BREZHNEV'S SUGGESTION IN HIS CPSU
CONGRESS SPEECH THAT THE FRENCH AND BRITISH TAKE A
MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE PEACE PROCESS.

THE SYRIAN OFFICIAL ALSO SAID HE EXPECTED THE FRENCH, IN
VIEW OF THE PRESENT LACK OF PROGRESS, WOULD PROPOSE THEIR
OWN MEDIATION EFFORT. (CONFIDENTIAL) DAMASCUS 1380 (EXDIS),
3/10.)

3. COD WAR: PATROL BOAT DIPLOMACY

THE ICELANDIC JUSTICE MINISTRY HAS PUBLICLY CALLED ON FOREIGN
MINISTER AGUSTSSON TO FORMALLY REQUEST THAT THE USG
LEASE OR SELL FAST PATROL BOATS TO THE GOI.

EMBASSY COMMENT: WHILE THE DECISION HAS BEEN MADE BY THE
GOI TO ENHANCE THEIR CAPABILITY TO PATROL THE DISPUTED
WATERS, THIS REQUEST IS AN ATTEMPT BY JUSTICE MINISTER
JOHANNESSEN TO EMBARRASS THE USG. WHEN ANNOUNCING IT,
JOHANNESSEN IMPLIED HE WILL SEEK USSR ASSISTANCE IF THE USG
REFUSES. THE GOI LEADERS ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE ONLY
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RESPONSE POSSIBLE, BUT THE REQUEST MAY BE TRANSMITTED TO
THE USG NEVERTHELESS IN ORDER TO STALL FOR TIME. (CONFIDENTIAL)
REYKJAVIK 339, 3/10.)

4. THE NIXON VISIT TO CHINA--A THOUSAND PARDONS

FEI I-MIN, THE WELL INFORMED EDITOR OF THE PRC'S MAIN NEWS-
PAPER IN HONG KONG, TOLD CONSULATE GENERAL HONG KONG MARCH

10 THAT CHINA HAD BADLY MISCALCULATED THE REACTION OF THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE TO THE NIXON TRIP. FEI ALLEGED THAT WHEN

THE FULL IMPACT OF THE US MEDIA CRITICISM BEGAN TO SOAK IN
ON THE PRC LEADERSHIP, THEY TOOK STEPS TO LOWER SLIGHTLY
THE PROTOCOL LEVEL OF THE VISIT.

CONSULATE GENERAL COMMENT: FEI SEEMED GENUINELY EMBARRAS-
SED AND RATHER APOLOGETIC ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE VISIT ON
US PUBLIC OPINION. SINCE HE PRESUMABLY IS USED AS A SEMI-
OFFICIAL CONDUIT FOR PRC VIEWS IN HONG KONG, IT SEEMS LIKE-
LY THAT THE CHINESE WANTED THIS MEA CULPA CONVEYED TO
WASHINGTON. (CONFIDENTIAL) HONG KONG 2765, 3/10.) INGERSOLL

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